



Head Coaches Press Conference Quotes

USC head coach Lane Kiffin and Georgia Tech head coach Paul Johnson addressed the media on Thursday, Dec. 6.

Coach Kiffin - USC (opening statement)

“First off I want to open up with an apology from myself and on behalf of our whole university. One of our 120 players put something on Twitter that is not representative of how we feel. That’s been addressed since and I would like to, myself, apologize to everybody down here.

“We are extremely excited about this. We haven’t been to a bowl game in three years and it

was a long two years and our players are really excited. We had our first bowl practice yesterday morning. They don't know much about this bowl game having not been here before or SC not been her for a number of years. We talked to our kids about it and went ahead and had a good practice. We're excited for the matchup, playing a team that has done a phenomenal job. They're one of the best-coached teams in the entire country and one of the hardest to prepare for. They've been very fortunate enough to knock off a number of great teams over the years because they're so disciplined and they're coached so well. We'll get down here after we have a little bit of a Christmas break where our players get to go home and we'll meet down here on the 26th. We're excited for a great week down here at the Sun Bowl."

(on how they got to the Hyundai Sun Bowl)

"We started the season 6-1 and we were at Arizona on the road up by 15, halfway through the third quarter and had the ball. We missed the deep ball that would've put us up by 22 and the next possession we had a ball thrown at us that we dropped and unfortunately from that point forward, we ended up losing that game and had a bad month. In a five-week span we went 1-4 after going 6-1 and it was obviously a very depressing way to finish the season, especially our last two losses. The good things that went well is we had some star players show up throughout the year with some big games, some huge stats and record-breaking performances. Unfortunately at the end of the day we turned the ball over on offense. We didn't do well in third down on offense and on defense we gave up too many yards and too many points and so we were 7-5."

(on QB Matt Barkley's status)

"We are anticipating Matthew playing in this game. He's not throwing yet, obviously he wouldn't have been able to play if it had been an earlier game. That was part of us loving this bowl game, too, is that it's a later game so that Matt can be back. We don't know that for sure, but we anticipate that he will be back. He's very excited about it; our team is (excited). We talked about it in length the other morning, a chance to finish on a great note, not just for the seniors, but the last chance together. The kids come down here for five, six days with each other for the last time that they'll ever do that. I know Matt is really pushing for this game to hopefully play well."

(on preparing for Georgia Tech's Offense)

"No, I don't know that there's another one (offense) around like it. It's extremely difficult to defend. It seems like no matter what people try to take away they have the answers. As I look at it, it reminds you of when Nebraska was making their great runs and it always seemed like

Coach (Tom) Osborne, like Coach Johnson, they had the answer to go to as soon as you took something away. They may take it away in the first quarter and you can see, the Nebraska teams started a little bit slow and then all of a sudden they'd take away the answer immediately to go to because they've done it for so long. They basically created that so it's very difficult to defend and very difficult to prepare for."

(on how the Hyundai Sun Bowl experience can help team contend for national title in future)

"It's great. It's an opportunity, number one, for us to practice more with our younger players, which we haven't had the last two off seasons, that allows us to look forward a little bit. We moved some guys around yesterday in practice to kind of see what it may look like for the future in other spots and to be able to play another game, one last game, especially for these seniors. We did not finish the way that we'd like, especially with our quarterback not being able to play in that last game."

(on Pac-12 mobile QBs preparing USC for Georgia Tech QB Tevin Washington)

"I don't know if they prepared us well because we didn't stop any of them. It's very different, obviously, different styles. Nothing that we played simulates this so we're fortunate that we have a bowl game to play. I don't know how people do it in one week to prepare for them. Fortunately we have extra time."

(on the challenge of not having been to a bowl recently)

"We have a lot of coaches in our staff that have been in bowls. The last place we were at we were in one three years ago and the last time we were at USC, I think our last five years there we were in a BCS bowl. We've been in a lot of them, we just haven't in the last two years with our players."

Paul Johnson
Head Coach
Georgia Tech

(opening statement)

"On behalf of our administration, our coaching staff and our football team just let me say how excited we are to have the opportunity to come back to El Paso. I thought that last year was a great experience. The committee, the volunteers and everyone involved were tremendous and our guys had a great time right up until the end of the game when the clock struck zero and we were on the wrong end of that. Fortunately, we're here again this year. We have the opportunity to come back and play against another great team with great tradition and some great football players.

"Last week, when we found out that we were coming back to the Sun Bowl and we were going to play the Trojans of Southern Cal, I don't know what I did to become so lucky to get the University of Georgia, Florida State and Southern Cal all in a row. It'll be quite a challenge for us. As I said, they're very well coached. They have a very good team with a lot of great individual players. But we're looking forward to having a chance to come back and play.

“Our season was kind of a roller coaster, as (USC Head Coach) Lane (Kiffin) was talking about theirs a little bit. We got off to a really rough start at 2-4. We lost two big conference games in overtime. One, we blew a 17-point fourth quarter lead. The other we lost in the last 40 seconds after we took the lead. I think it had a tremendous effect on our team, especially early on, but to the credit of our seniors and the assistant coaches and the guys in the staff, we kind of got the thing turned a little bit. We won four conference games in a row and ended up tied for our division and playing in the championship game. The last couple of games have not gone as well for us, we came up on the wrong end of those two games so it’s a great opportunity to come and play another program with national reputation and a chance to try to end the season on a positive note. So we’re looking forward to coming back to El Paso.”

(on how he feels about the team’s performance in the ACC title game)

“I think you always feel bad when you lose. We did not play well against the University of Georgia for whatever reason. I think they have a very talented football team and maybe they have one of the best teams they’ve had in a long time since I’ve been at Georgia Tech. I thought our guys played hard against Florida State but we just didn’t make enough plays offensively to get it done. We had the ball down in the red zone several times and had to kick field goals. We missed a couple of guys open on pass plays. When you don’t throw it often, you need to hit them when you do get wide open. We missed a couple of those and didn’t do enough to get it done. I always tell our guys, ‘If you play hard you have a chance, it doesn’t guarantee the success, but it’ll give you a chance.’ I was proud of our guys. I thought they played hard in the championship game. You put that behind you. Southern Cal is a very talented team so we’ll have a lot of work in trying to get ready to slow them down. Certainly offensively with their quarterback and their receivers and the skill they have, just starting to break it down last week when we found out. They’ve got a lot of tremendous athletes. It’ll be a challenge for us but I think our guys will embrace that and we look forward to playing against some of the best players in the country.”

(on Georgia Tech’s fan support in El Paso)

“I heard a lot of positive things from our fans that came to El Paso about the hospitality in the time they got to spend here. The neat thing I think about what (Sun Bowl Association Executive Director) Bernie (Olivas) and the people at the Sun Bowl have done is they have such a great local following and such a good nucleus of fans and support here in El Paso that the teams feel like whichever side that the locals decide to get on certainly gives you some kind of home field advantage and that kind of atmosphere. I thought last year there was a great atmosphere at the game. I thought the fans were into it and it ended up being an exciting game all the way through the fourth quarter and it went great except at the end when we didn’t stop them on fourth down.

(on returning players)

“I think we’re just excited to have a chance to play especially after the way the season started. I’m terrible with numbers, I think this is Georgia Tech’s 15th or 16th straight-bowl game and we certainly didn’t want to be, the seniors didn’t want to be the ones that broke that string. We dug ourselves a hole starting at 2-4 and I think that was a big part of the push to have an opportunity to play. We wanted to play in a bowl game and then we found out we had a chance to come back to El Paso and the Sun Bowl and play a quality opponent like Southern Cal it just made it more exciting for our guys. So they’re looking forward to it. They have a chance to play a team

that was preseason ranked No. 1 in the country and while that's a huge challenge, it also serves as motivation to our guys to get ready."

(on what he remembers the most about last year outside of the game)

"There was a lot of things that were a lot of fun. I think the biggest thing I took from the game was just the people. I think the people of El Paso are great, the bowl people from Bernie (Olivas) to everybody involved, the hospitality that was shown I think that was probably the one thing we took more so than anything else."

(on walking into a unique stadium like the Sun Bowl)

"I had been to the Sun Bowl a few times having coached at the University of Hawaii and UTEP used to be in our league when I was there. I think the experience of the week is more than walking into the stadium. Once you walk into the stadium on gameday you're pretty much just dialed on what you have got to do. The surroundings around you don't affect you as much as maybe that week when you do your walk through or you're at the high school practicing and you see all the different things that way. But certainly for our guys, most of them are from the state of Georgia, a few from Florida and North Carolina, this is certainly different to what they're accustomed to. I think they embraced it a year ago and they look forward to coming back. Like I said, they had a great time."